



ADVENTURES INTO

APR.
NO.
9

TERROR

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THE
**DARK
DUNGEON!**



GHOULS RUSH IN!

THE TALKING CORPSE!

SECOND FLOOR REAR!

**MORE
ADVENTURES
INTO
TERROR**



Reducing Specialist Says:
LOSE WEIGHT

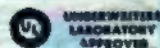
Where
It
Shows
Most

REDUCE

MOST ANY
PART OF
THE
BODY WITH

Spot Reducer

Relaxing • Soothing
Penetrating Massage



**PLUG IN
GRASP
HANDLE
AND
APPLY**

Take pounds off—keep slim
and trim with Spot Reducer!
Remarkable new invention
which uses one of the most
effective reducing methods
employed by masseurs and
turbish baths—**MASSAGE!**

LIKE a magic wand, the "Spot Reducer" obeys your every wish. Most any part of your body where it is loose and flabby, wherever you have extra weight and inches, the "Spot Reducer" can aid you in acquiring a youthful, slender and graceful figure. The beauty of this scientifically designed Reducer is that the method is so simple and easy, the results quick, sure and harmless. No exercises or strict diets. No steambaths, drugs or laxatives.

With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of RELAXING, SOOTHING massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down FAT TISSUES, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat—helps you regain and keep a firmer and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!

YOUR OWN PRIVATE MASSEUR AT HOME

When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains—and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handily made of light weight aluminum and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own. AC 110 volts. Underwriters Laboratory approved.

TAKE OFF EXCESS WEIGHT!

**Don't Stay FAT—You Can LOSE
POUNDS and INCHES SAFELY** Without Risking
HEALTH

TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!

Mail this coupon with only \$1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman \$8.95 plus delivery—or send \$9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of FAT. **MAIL COUPON NOW!**

SENT ON APPROVAL—MAIL COUPON NOW!

ALSO USE IT FOR ACES AND PAINS



CAN'T SLEEP!

Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.



MUSCULAR ACES:

A handy helper for transient relief of discomforts that can be aided by gentle, relaxing massage.

**LOSE WEIGHT
OR NO CHARGE**

USED BY EXPERTS

Thousands have lost weight this way—in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, neck, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own room.

ORDER IT TODAY!

**SPOT REDUCER CO., Dept. E 734
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Please send me the Spot Reducer for 10 days trial period. I enclose \$1. Upon arrival I will pay postman only \$8.95 plus postage and handling. If not delighted I may return SPOT REDUCER within 10 days for prompt refund of full purchase price.

Name

Address

City State

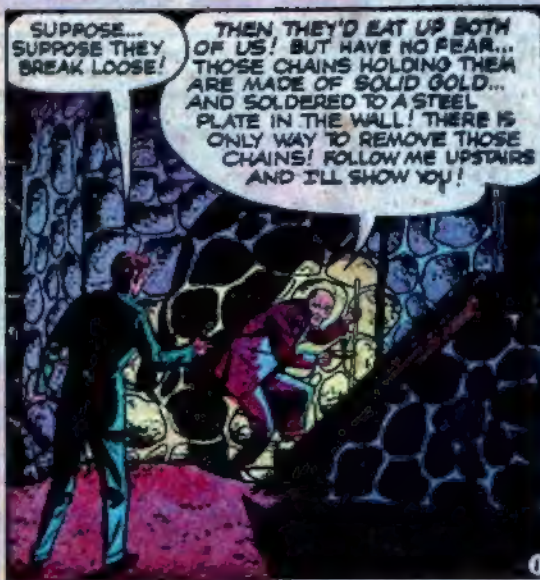
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LOSE WEIGHT OR NO CHARGE

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MAIL THIS 10 DAY FREE TRIAL COUPON NOW!

THE DARK DUNGEON



ALL NAMES AND PLACES IN THESE STORIES ARE FICTITIOUS
ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN ACTUAL PERSONS OR PLACES AND THOSE USED IN THESE STORIES IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL

AND SO LIKE A FRIGHTENED, OBEDIENT PUPPY, I FOLLOWED HIM UP... AND EACH CREAKING FOOTSTEP UP THOSE OLD STAIRS LEADING FROM THE DARK DUNGEON, SEEMED TO WARN ME TO GET OUT OF HABERSHAM HALL AS FAST AS POSSIBLE...

LIVING ALONE THE WAY I DO... TWENTY YEARS... I HAD TO TAKE SOME PRECAUTIONS... TO PROTECT MY LIFE... AND MY MONEY! THAT'S WHY I KEEP THOSE MASTIFFS HUNGRY... TO RIP APART ANY INTRUDER WHO DARES TO ENTER HABERSHAM HALL!



AND HERE, CONCEALED IN THE BAROQUE FRAME OF THIS PAINTING IS A TINY BUTTON! THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH ON IT WILL CAUSE THE CHAINS TO DROP OFF THE DOGS! THEIR HUNGER WILL DRIVE THEM TO ATTACK EVERY LIVING THING IN THE HOUSE!

EVEN YOU, UNCLE HORATIO?



YES... I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN LIVE WITHOUT MONEY! BUT I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT NOW THAT YOU'VE COME TO LIVE WITH ME, MY DEAR NEPHEW!



YOU WILL STAY CLOSE TO ME ALWAYS... YOU WILL HELP ME GUARD MY MONEY! YOU ARE THE ONLY LIVING RELATIVE LEFT, NOW THAT YOUR MOTHER IS DEAD!

BUT UNCLE, I-I...



DON'T INTERRUPT WHEN I'M SPEAKING! NOW THAT SHE'S DEAD... THIS HOUSE, ALL MY MONEY... EVERYTHING WILL GO TO YOU WHEN I DIE!

WHAT? ALL YOUR MILLIONS TO ME?



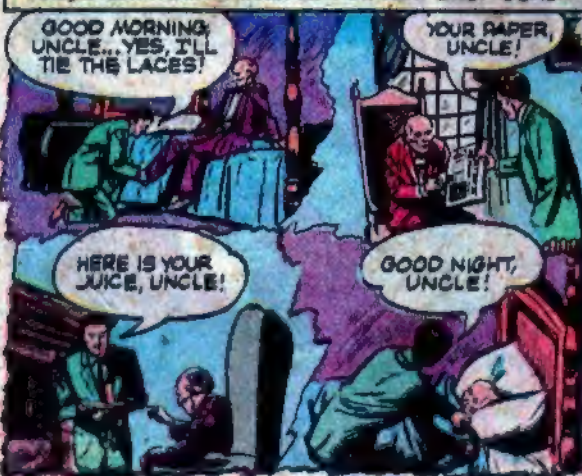
WILD HORSES COULDN'T DRAG ME OUT OF THAT HOUSE AFTER I HEARD THAT! SO I STAYED AT HABERSHAM HALL... WAITING ON HIM, DRESSING HIM, FEEDING HIM! AND, EVERY MINUTE I HOPED THAT HE'D DROP DEAD...

GOOD MORNING, UNCLE... YES, I'LL TIE THE LACES!

YOUR PAPER, UNCLE!

HERE IS YOUR JUICE, UNCLE!

GOOD NIGHT, UNCLE!



FIVE YEARS PASSED... AND HIS DRIED UP GHOSTLY BODY HAUNTED THE HALLS OF HABERSHAM! FOR FIVE YEARS I TOOK HIS ORDERS, HIS ABUSE... AND I WAS SICK OF IT...

THAT BLASTED MISER WILL LIVE FOREVER JUST SO THAT HE CAN HANG ON TO HIS MONEY! BUT I'VE WAITED FIVE YEARS FOR HIM TO DIE... AND I DON'T INTEND TO WAIT ANY LONGER!



SO I ARRANGED FOR AN "ACCIDENT" TO HAPPEN TO MY DEAR UNCLE! I TIED A THIN, STRONG WIRE ACROSS THE TOP OF THE STAIRS ONE NIGHT, AND WHEN HE CAME OUT OF HIS BEDROOM...

JEROME! WHERE ARE YOU?
HELP ME DOWN THE STAIRS... IT'S
SO BLASTED DARK I... I...
OHHH...



OHH!

OWW!

OFF-F!

BLAM!

BLAM!

BAM!

I UNTIED THE WIRE AND PUT IT INTO MY POCKET...
THEN I RAN DOWNSTAIRS...

AHH... AT LAST HE'S DEAD!
NOW HIS MONEY IS MINE...
ALL MINE!



J... JEROME!
(GASP!) HELP ME...
JEROME!

GOOD HEAVENS!
HE... HE'S STILL ALIVE!



YES, HE WAS ALIVE... AND HE ORDERED ME TO
CALL A DOCTOR...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT KEEPS YOUR UNCLE
ALIVE, SON! THAT FALL WOULD'VE EVEN
KILLED A YOUNG MAN! HOWEVER, BOTH OF
HIS LEGS ARE BROKEN... HE'LL
HAVE TO GET AROUND IN A
WHEELCHAIR FOR AS LONG
AS HE LIVES!

YOU MEAN,
HE IS GOING
TO LIVE?

FOR
HOW
LONG,
DOCTOR?

WHO KNOWS? MAYBE FIVE
YEARS... MAYBE TEN! IF THAT FALL
DIDN'T KILL HIM WHO KNOWS
WHAT CAN! ANYWAY, HE'S LUCKY
TO HAVE A NEPHEW LIKE YOU
TO LOOK AFTER HIM...
GOOD NIGHT!



TWO MORE YEARS PASSED...TWO YEARS OF WHEELING THE OLD MAN AROUND IN HIS CHAIR...CARRYING HIM DOWNSTAIRS...UPSTAIRS...PUTTING HIM TO BED! I HATED EVERY MINUTE OF IT...



THEN ONE NIGHT WHEN I WAS FEEDING MY UNCLE'S CHAINED MONSTERS THEIR MEAGER WEEKLY FARE...



A FEW MINUTES LATER...I DRUGGED UNCLE HORATIO'S NIGHTLY ORANGE JUICE...



AND HE DRANK IT WITHOUT SUSPECTING A THING...



TWO MINUTES LATER HE WAS ASLEEP...AND I WHEELED HIM TOWARD THE DARK DUNGEON...



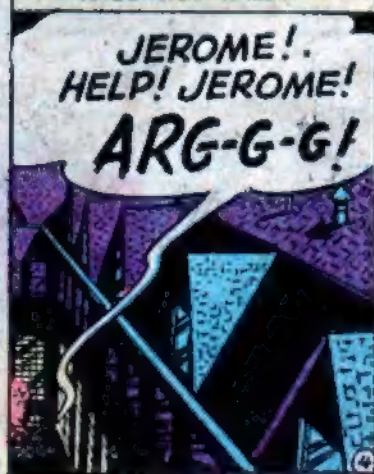
I PUT HIM INTO THE SAME ROOM WITH THE HALF-STARVED, VICIOUS DOGS OF HIS!



I LOCKED THE DOOR AND WENT UPSTAIRS...TO THE PICTURE FRAME WITH THE TINY BUTTON! MY FINGER TREMBLED AS I PRESSED IT...HARD...



AND FROM THE DARK DUNGEON MY UNCLE'S SCREAMS RANG THRU HABERSHAM HALL...MY HABERSHAM HALL...



UNCLE HORATIO KEPT ALL HIS MONEY IN THE HOUSE SO I HAD NO EMBARRASSING LEGAL COMPLICATIONS! I SPENT THE FIRST TWO WEEKS AFTER HIS DEATH COUNTING HIS FABULOUS FORTUNE!

THE OLD MISER WAS RICHER THAN I THOUGHT! I'VE COUNTED OVER TWO MILLION DOLLARS... AND THERE'S STILL MORE! AND THERE'S THAT GOLD CHAIN THAT HELD THE DOGS! I WON'T FEED THEM ANY MORE... AND WHEN THEY STARVE TO DEATH, I'LL GO DOWN TO GET IT!

**KNOCK!
KNOCK!**



HE WOULDN'T TELL ME HOW HE KNEW OF UNCLE'S DEATH...BUT HE KNEW...SO I HAD TO LET HIM IN! I WAS FORCED TO LIVE IN HABERSHAM HALL WITH HIM...

IT'S SO GENEROUS OF YOU TO LET ME STAY HERE WITH YOU ALL THIS TIME JEROME! WAITING ON YOU AND SERVING YOU IS MY WAY OF THANKING YOU!

YOU'RE A BLASTED LIAR! THIS IS BLACKMAIL AND YOU KNOW IT!



OH...MY...MY LEGS...THEY'RE BROKEN! THEY MUST BE BROKEN! QUICK...CALL A DOCTOR!

NO, JEROME... THAT WOULDN'T BE WISE! HE'LL ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT HORATIO! I'LL FIX YOUR LEGS!



WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I HEARD THAT HORATIO HAS PASSED AWAY...SO I CAME TO LIVE IN HABERSHAM HALL! I KNOW HE'D WANT ME TO!



THEN ONE NIGHT, A FEW WEEKS LATER, WHILE I WAS IN BED...I HEARD A SCREAM! I RAN OUT OF THE BEDROOM AND STARTED DOWNSTAIRS WHEN I TRIPPED AND...

OWW!

**BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!**



HE FIXED THEM ALL RIGHT...FIXED THEM SO THAT I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO WALK AGAIN! I WAS DOOMED TO A WHEELCHAIR FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...

WHY DON'T YOU GET OUT OF THIS BLASTED HOUSE? GO AWAY...I'LL GIVE YOU HALF OF THE MONEY...ANYTHING... ONLY GET OUT!

I LIKE IT HERE, JEROME...AND YOU MUSTN'T GET EXCITED! HERE...DRINK YOUR JUICE AND I'LL TAKE YOU UPSTAIRS!



I DRANK THE JUICE... AND
SUDDENLY I FELT DROWSY... MY
SENSES WHIRLED... MY UNCLE'S
FACE INVADED MY DREAMS...



I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG
I SLEPT... BUT WHEN I WOKE
UP I FOUND MYSELF IN...

THE DARK DUNGEON!
HE BROUGHT ME HERE! HE
DOPED MY DRINK AND
WHEELED ME IN HERE!



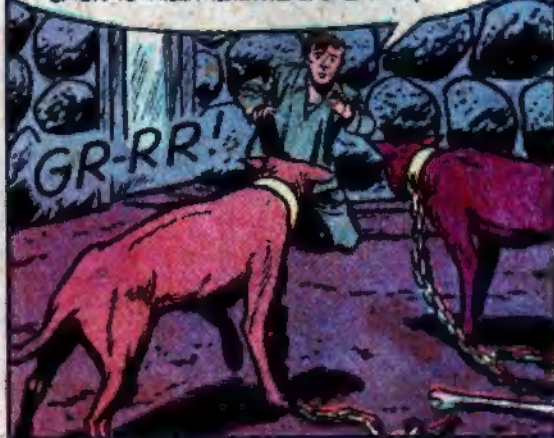
BUT WHY DIDN'T THE DOGS
TEAR HIM APART? THEY HAVEN'T
BEEN FED FOR WEEKS... I'VE
NEVER SEEN THEM LOOK SO
HUNGRY AND VICIOUS... AND
THEY'RE NOT CHAINED!



GOOD HEAVENS... THERE'S THE MARKS
THE WHEELCHAIR LEFT ON THE DAMP
GROUND WHEN I WAS WHEELED IN! BUT THERE
ARE NO FOOTPRINTS... HE BROUGHT ME IN
HERE... HE'D HAVE TO LEAVE FOOTPRINTS!
UNLESS... HE WAS A GHOST!



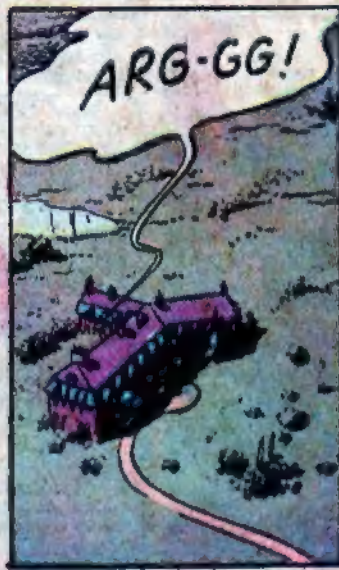
MY UNCLE HORATIO'S GHOST! THAT'S
HOW HE KNEW I KILLED HIM... THAT ACCIDENT
I HAD... THAT DOPED ORANGE JUICE... JUST
THE WAY I KILLED HIM... AND HE CAME
BACK TO KILL ME... THE SAME WAY!



GR-R!
AR-ROW!



ARG-GG!



SEVEN YEARS HAVE PASSED...
AND I'M STILL HERE AT
HABERSHAM HALL... STILL
WAITING ON UNCLE HORATIO...



Meet The Man...

Who Can Tell You How To Lick

PIMPLES

ACNE AND ALL OTHER EXTERNALLY CAUSED
SKIN BLEMISHES And Make Them

DISAPPEAR FROM SIGHT... *instantly!*

Here is Mr. John A. Rubine, Ph.D. — a well-known pharmacist who has spent almost 20 years trying to solve one of the most vexing problems of youth — and adults too — unsightly, acne pimples, blackheads and similar externally caused skin conditions.

They are indeed a serious problem, for nothing can do more to ruin your chances of success and popularity than a face made ugly with pimples and blackheads. And, if neglected, acne pimples may leave permanent scars and pits.

Mr. Rubine, after much experimenting and research in cooperation with doctors and chemists, found what he was seeking — a formula that would lick acne pimples and other externally caused skin blemishes. He succeeded beyond his fondest expectations and he was so proud of his treatment that he gave it his own name — RUBIN-EX.

DOUBLE ACTION! DOUBLE QUICK RESULTS!

The sensational Rubin-Ex treatment works two ways:
A. Makes acne pimples and all other skin blemishes INSTANTLY DISAPPEAR FROM SIGHT.

B. Its medication cleans up pimples, blackheads.

When thousands of tiny oil glands discharge more oil than your skin can absorb, the excess oil picks up and holds tiny particles of dust, dirt, grime, grit, bacteria. This foreign matter soon clogs up and enlarges your pores, forms blackheads, cause infection and soon you have a fine crop of ugly, red acne pimples.

Rubin-Ex FORMULA #1 is a special cleaning agent that really gets down in the skin, pores and thoroughly cleans them out as in soap can. It also removes excess oil thus correcting excessive oiliness in your skin, one of the principal causes of pimples and blackheads.

Rubin-Ex FORMULA #2 is great news. When applied to your face it makes pimples and other unsightly blemishes disappear from sight instantly.

And while it is hiding your ugly blemishes from critical eyes, its medication is actually at work to clean them up. It contains an ingredient that relieves the itchy itching, another to soothe and heal the irritation, and still another which gently and harmoniously takes off the dead, hard outer skin, leaving your face and complexion much smoother and clearer. You can use Rubin-Ex day and night, for it neutralizes when applied and does not interfere with make-up. Makes an excellent powder base.



HE BLESSES RUBIN-EX! No one can replace the humiliation — almost disgrace — of a face marred by pimples and blackheads. I was there, so bad that I felt no one wanted to look at me. Today my pimples are gone — and I thank Rubin-Ex — that did it! — Mr. Abe I.R., Long Island.



LUCKY DAY FOR HER! For years I was embarrassed and ashamed of my pimply face and blotchy complexion. It was a lucky day for me when I was told about Rubin-Ex. My pimples disappeared from sight instantly and my complexion improves 100%. — Miss Jane B.B., Bronx.

HOW YOU MAY TRY RUBIN-EX AT OUR RISK

Mr. Rubine is so sure that his treatment will improve your skin and complexion in just 10 days that he is making this **RISK OFFER**. He says, "Use Rubin-Ex for 10 days. If you do not notice a marked improvement in your skin and complexion,

if you are not entirely pleased and happy with results, your money will be refunded at once." So start now for a clearer, lovelier skin and complexion, the magic way to popularity and success. Order Rubin-Ex today. MAIL COUPON NOW.

MR. JOHN A. RUBINE PH.D.

SKINTEX CORP., 69-47 215 St., Dept. M-1 Bayside, L. I., N. Y.

Dear Mr. Rubine: Please rush me in plain wrapper complete Rubin-Ex treatment (Formula #1 and #2). It is understood that if I am not completely satisfied with the improvement in my complexion in just 10 days you will return my money. ☐ Please enclose \$2 Cash, Check or Money Order. You are to pay all postal charges.

Name ☐ CRICK ☐ MALE ☐ FEMALE

Address ☐ CHECK ☐ COMPLEXION ☐ FAIR ☐ DARK

City ☐ Zone ☐ State

A.P.O. - F.P.O. Canada or Foreign Countries - Add 50¢ - No C.O.D.

MR. JOHN A. RUBINE PH.D.

SKINTEX CORP.

69-47 215 St., Dept. M-1 Bayside, L. I., N. Y.

SECOND FLOOR REAR!

AFTER RATTLING AROUND IN THE SEVENTEEN EMPTY ROOMS OF THIS GLOOMY OLD HOUSE FOR OVER A YEAR, I SHOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE MR. VESI UP THERE ON THE SECOND FLOOR REAR! BUT ONLY IN THE MONTH HE'S BEEN HERE HAVE I NOTICED THE REEK OF DECAY ABOUT AND FELT SOME VAGUE AIR OF DOOM...



THERE HE IS NOW, THIS MR. VESI... AND WITH A BUNDLE! IT WILL GIVE ME AN EXCUSE TO TALK TO HIM... HE'S SUCH A SHY MAN, AND LONELY, TERRIBLY LONELY!

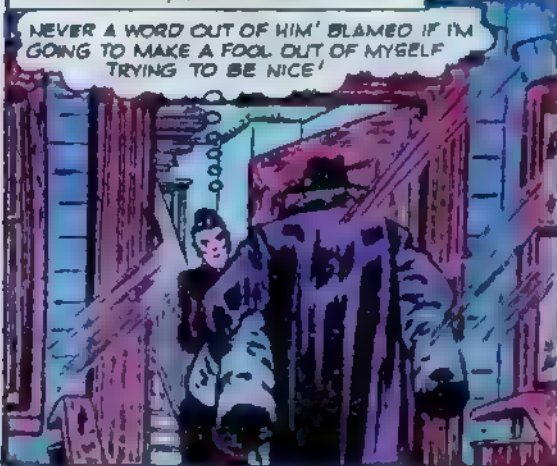


GOOD EVENING, MR VESI! A REAL BRISK AUTUMN NIGHT, ISN'T IT? ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE LOADED DOWN... IF I CAN GIVE YOU A HAND...





I DIDN'T TAKE MUCH HEED OF MR VES! HIS BIG BUNDLE LAST NIGHT! BUT TONIGHT HE'S HERE WITH TWO MORE, AND I CAN'T HELP WONDERING WHAT THIS STRANGE, QUIET MAN IS UP TO...



WISH SOMETIMES HE'D LEAVE! HE'S LIKE... LIKE ONE OF THOSE MEN YOU READ ABOUT... A GRAVE ROBBER OR A MURDERER... BRINGING HOME THE CUT-UP BODIES OF...



I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT!



CURIOSITY HAS OVERCOME MY UNEASINESS, AND MY HEART LEAPS EVERY TIME A STAIR CREAKS UNDER MY WEIGHT. BUT AS I REACH THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING...

HA! HA!
HO! HO!
HA! HA!

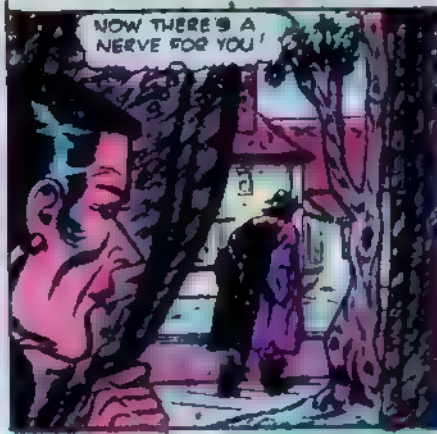
MEN... LAUGHING 'THAT'S STRANGE' I DIDN'T SEE ANYONE GO UP WITH HIM... UNLESS THEY CAME WHILE I WAS OUT SHOPPING LATE THIS AFTERNOON!



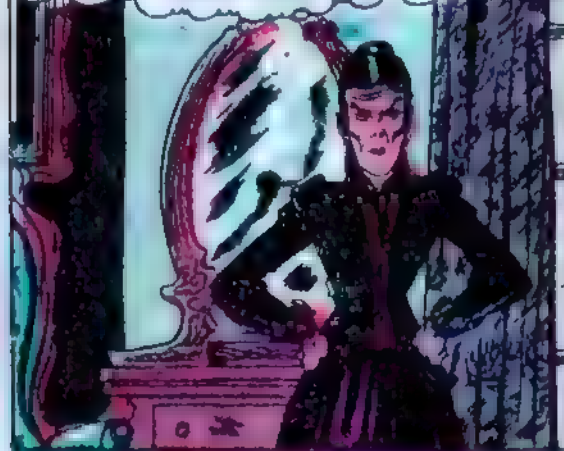
FOR GOODNESS SAKE, MR VES! PLAYING CARDS AND LOOKING HAPPY AS A LARK! OH, I'M SO GLAD HE'S MADE SOME FRIENDS. HOW SILLY OF ME TO WORRY ABOUT SOME OLD BUNDLES!



I ASSUMED MR VES'S FRIENDS HAD LEFT THAT NIGHT, BUT I HEARD THEM UP IN HIS LOOM THE FOLLOWING THREE EVENINGS, AND I LAY AWAKE ALL LAST NIGHT, AND HEARD NO ONE COME DOWN TILL MR VES! LEFT FOR WORK JUST NOW



HIM BRINGING PEOPLE HERE TO STAY... AT MY EXPENSE! NOT A CENT MORE DOES HE OFFER! UMMM! THAT'S WHAT THOSE BUNDLES WERE FOR... BLANKETS FOR HIS FRIENDS... AND MAYBE FOOD!



I'VE PUT UP WITH JUST ABOUT ENOUGH... HIM SCARING ME LIKE THAT WITH THOSE BUNDLES, AND ACTING SO QUEER! SO, I WAIT TILL NIGHT, TILL I HEAR HIM COME HOME AND GO UP!



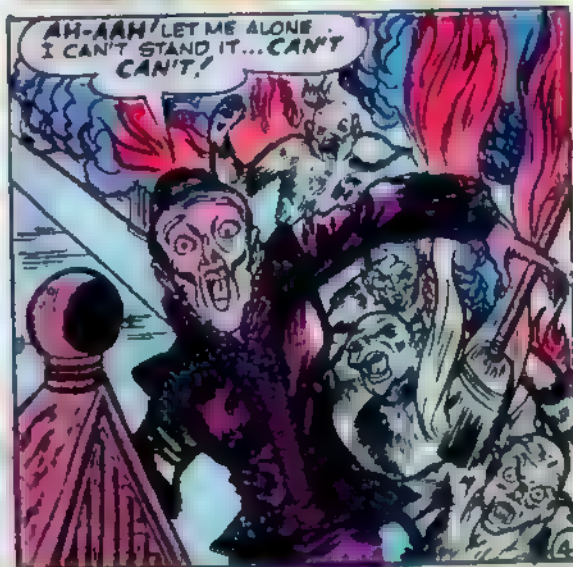
MY BLOOD RAN COLD AS I THROW OPEN MR. VES'S DOOR... HIS "FRIENDS" ARE NOTHING BUT DUMMIES... MEN OF STRAW! THAT EXPLAINED THE BUNDLES! THIS POOR, WRETCHED, LONELY MAN CREATED THESE GROTESQUE CREATURES FOR COMPANY!



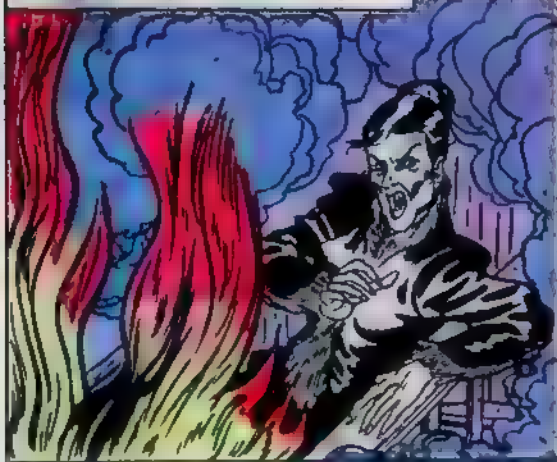
I CAN'T EXPLAIN THOSE HIDEOUS, EVIL-LOOKING MONSTERS TO MYSELF! I KNOW THEY CAN'T EXIST... BUT THEY'RE HERE, COMING FOR ME! I SHOULD RUN, BUT I HAVE TO CERTIFY THEM!



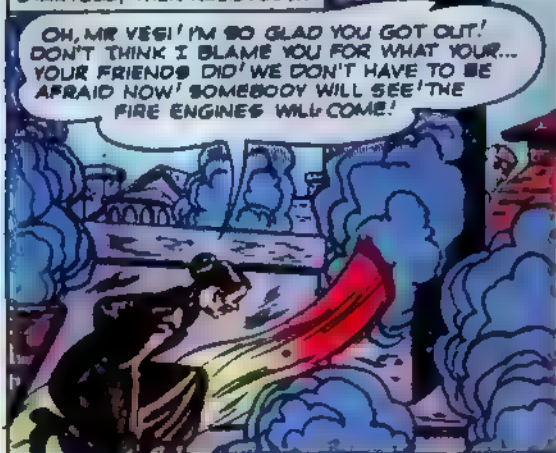
IF ONLY THEY'D MAKE SOME SOUND... THEY EVEN SCREAM IN SILENCE! THAT I CAN THINK IN THIS MOMENT OF HORROR IS A MIRACLE! THEY HAVE CUT ME OFF FROM THE STAIRS GOING DOWN... BUT I'D BE SAFE LOCKING MYSELF OUT ON THE ROOF!



THE LAST OF THEM DIED IN FLAMES, AND NOW I AM AWARE OF A NEW MENACE! FIRE CREEPS FROM THEIR CHARRED STRAW BODIES, AS IF TO TAKE UP WHERE THE LOATHSOME CREATURES LEFT OFF, BENT ON FILLING MY NIGHT WITH HORROR...



I CRAWLED TO TEMPORARY SAFETY ON THE ROOF INTENDING, IN A MOMENT, TO GO TO THE EDGE AND CALL FOR HELP! NOW A PRICKLING SENSATION ON THE BACK OF MY NECK MAKES ME TURN, FIRST STARTLED, THEN RELIEVED...



THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

THIS would be one of the easiest assignments of his career, Bill Compton decided.

"A snap," he muttered to himself. "One easy little job. Writing a couple of sticks about some flowers."

"Talking about snaps," his editor commented drily, "start snapping out of it, man! It's not going to be easy. I can tell you that right now. I've lost two reporters on this story already. There must be some reason why steady men like Burke and Kofillo never even bothered to come back and collect the pay that was owing to them."

"Hmmm," Bill said, his interest picking up. "You think they were murdered by this bunch of flower-worshippers, chief?"

"I don't know. The way I feel about it, if it was murder, there ought to be bodies. It's not so easy to dispose of one body, let alone two. But we couldn't find a trace of their bodies, alive or dead."

Bill Compton shook his head sagely. "Then they both probably got tired of working here and took off for the tall timber and whatever adventure they could find along the way. It's happened before, chief."

His editor shook his head in a violent negative. "Not to a quiet family man like Kofillo or a guy who loves his mother like

Burke does. Or did. No, something went wrong and neither we nor the police department could figure it out. That's where you come in."

"Brainy Bill Compton, I'm known as."

"Brains my foot! What we need here is a good reporter, a man who can't be prevented from picking up a good story, a man who knows so much about pulling information out of people that he hardly has to try. What we need here, in other words, is what practically everybody calls, 'Nosy Bill Compton.' I hope you don't mind."

"Mind?" the reporter asked bitterly. "Why should I mind? And what good would it do me if I did?"

"That's the spirit," the other man encouraged. "Now first—"

"I know. I'm supposed to toddle down to the big flower show and ask the people who won the first prize about their particular blooms."

"No, no, no," the editor told him in some irritation. "You do not! First because you'll get less information out of them than out of King Tut's mummy, and second because those are exactly the babies we suspect of finishing off or kidnapping Burke and Kofillo."

Bill whistled. "They are?

Why, do you think?"

"If we knew the answer to that one question, we'd probably have the answer to everything. No, the first thing you do is wander up to some of the scientists and judges at the flower show and see what they think about this years prizewinner. Then you call me and I tell you where to go on from there."

"That'll be awfully slow, chief. What's the idea?"

"The idea is that I'm trying to save your life. Sure we're going slow. We'll keep on going slow on this investigation until we know everything we need to know. Then we close in fast on those peculiar characters and the odd plants they worship!"

Bill wandered down to the flower show shortly afterwards. He strolled along the booths and displays, enjoying the riotous color and delicate scents.

After a while, he came to the flowers that had won first prize as the most unusual entries in the show. These were the people he'd been sent to investigate, he realized, as he glanced casually into the booth.

There were two attendants, both of them half-starved and greatly emaciated. They wore very poor clothes — in great contrast to the wealthy society matrons and gentlemen around

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

THE PROVED WAY TO BUILD MUSCLES OF STEEL!

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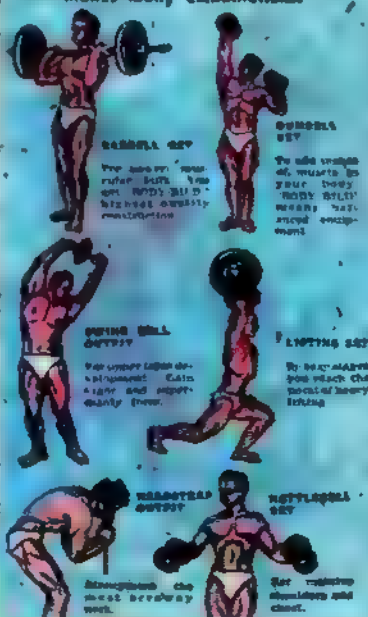
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...CONTINUED
them.

But they didn't seem to be interested in anything around them, including Bill Compton.

They were on their knees, their hands raised yearningly to the enormous potted plants above them. And, at the sight of the flowers which had won first prize, Bill forgot about the strange postures of the attendants.

The flowers were — unlike anything else he'd ever seen on Earth, or even dreamed of!

Almost a foot wide they were, some a pure rich white, others a lustrous and glowing black, with petals so large and so thick as to be almost like slabs of colored leather! They didn't taper into the stem, but continued as flowers for about six feet of length, until they abruptly curved out of sight into a pale stem that was slightly thicker than an arm!

And the flowers waved! Back and forth they seemed to wave, almost like the heads of snakes on their enormous stems that undulated in a slow and hypnotic rhythm.

Bill almost heard sound coming from the open blossoms: a steady murmur it sounded like, as if a cry of some sort were being muttered in a plant-like sleep. He shook himself to clear his head. In a moment, he'd be falling for this wacky nonsense!

But he could certainly understand why these blooms had won first prize. And why scientists were going crazy over the owners' refusal to have them examined! Science felt it could

learn a lot from these strange flowers about the construction of life — but what could it do when the only people who had a right to the gorgeous blossoms insisted on keeping them for a strange cultist worship that admitted no outsiders?

Although he knew he should be looking up the judges, Bill found himself wandering into the booth in fascination. "Just



take one close-up look and then I'll scoot," he promised himself.

He noted there were five great flowering plants in all, rising majestically out of their tremendous pots. One of them seemed to brush against him as he entered and he chuckled at his imagination. Still, it was sort of spooky in this place: the booth had been so constructed that outsiders could only see the inside if they stood directly in the doorway.

The reporter shook himself again. Better get back to business, he decided. But just on the off-chance he might get a clue from their reactions, he asked: "You boys wouldn't happen to have heard of two reporters named Burke and Ko-

fillo, by any chance?"

It seemed to him that another flower reached out to push against him and he shoved it away impatiently. And then he realized that one of the men had moved behind him! He started to turn and felt a sharp blow under his right ear. He began to crumple to the floor, just conscious enough to realize that the man in front of him had emptied some sort of liquid over his body which immediately began to feel very tired.

He curved his arms over his head and closed his eyes. He felt so very, very tired! What kind of barrel were they trying to shove his feet into? He really didn't care, just so he could sleep.

An hour later one of the judges came by and looked inside. "You know," he said, "it's really wonderful how those flowers of yours reproduce! When you started to exhibit them, you only had three; this morning you had five; and now, now I notice you have six! Positively amazing, those flowers!"



THE END

7771

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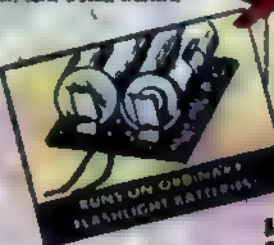
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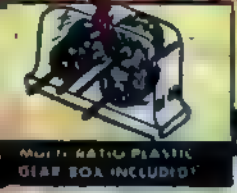
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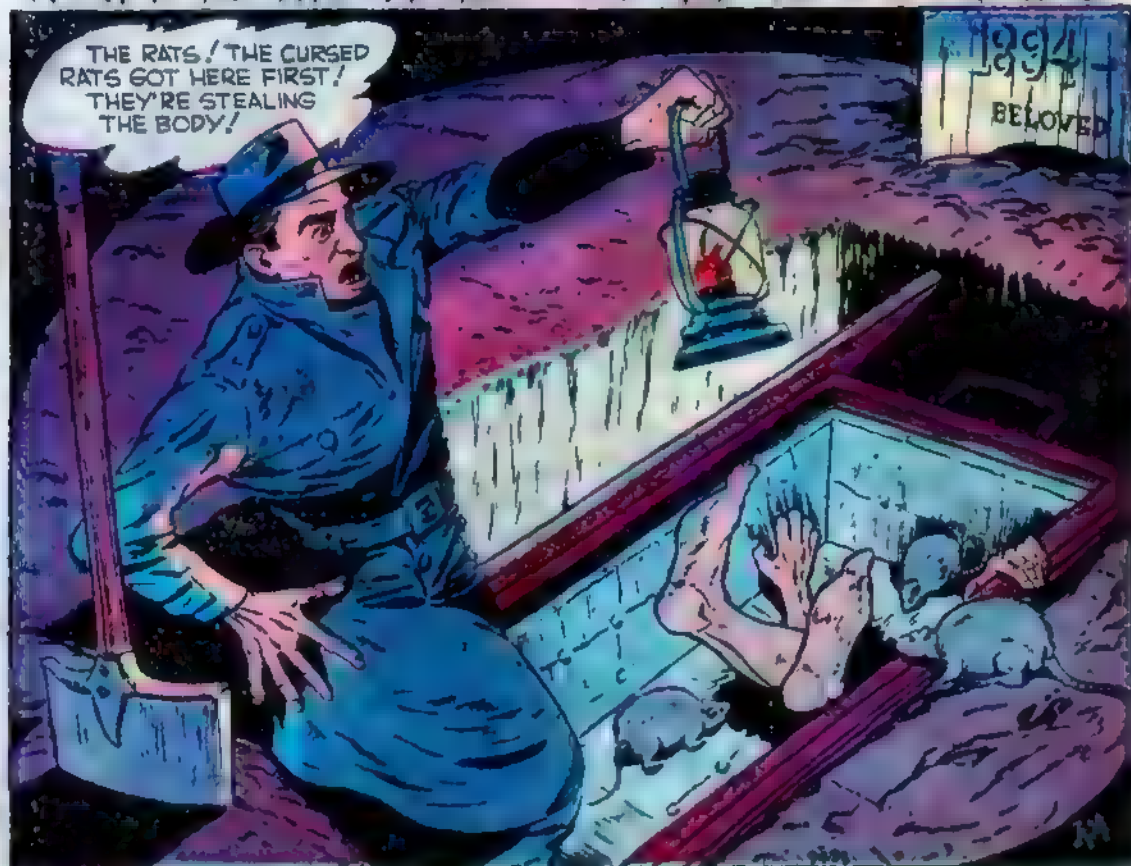
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GHOLLS RUSH IN

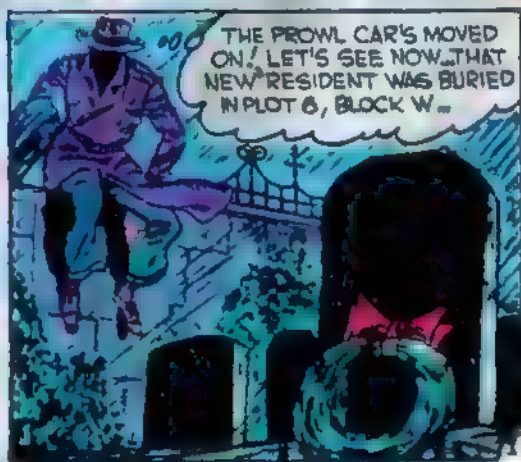


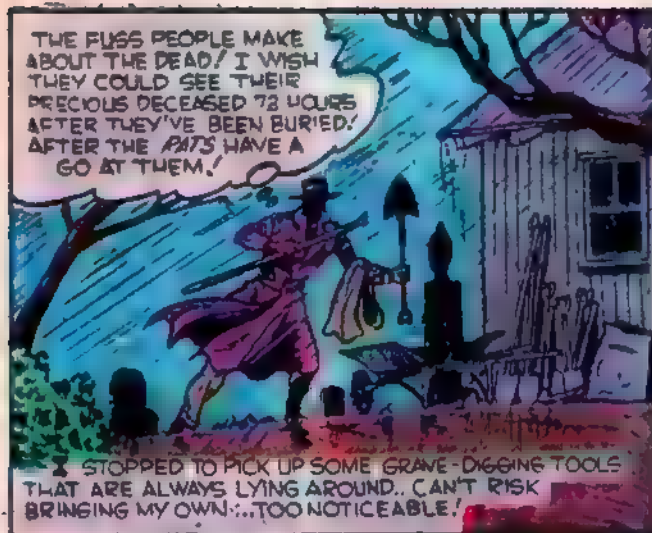
MY NAME IS JOHN MAGNUS MY PROFESSION, GRAVE-ROBBER! I ROB CORPSES OF ANYTHING WORTH THE TROUBLE...GOLD TEETH, RINGS, STICKPINS... ANYTHING VALUABLE TO ME AND VALUELESS TO A CACAVER! MY WORK IS DONE AT NIGHT...

IT'S STUPID FOR THE POLICE TO PATROL THE CEMETERY APPROACHES...WHOM ARE THEY GUARDING? THE CORPSES?



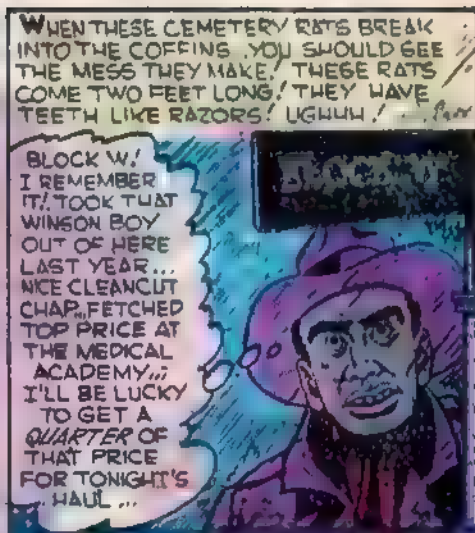
RIDICULOUS, ISN'T IT? ONE WOULD THINK A CORPSE NEEDED NO PROTECTION! AFTER ALL, WHO CAN HARM CORPSES? CAN THEY MISS THE LITTLE BAUBLES I STEAL FROM THEM?





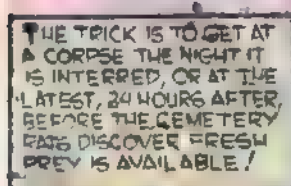
THE FUSS PEOPLE MAKE ABOUT THE DEAD! I WISH THEY COULD SEE THEIR PRECIOUS DECEASED 72 HOURS AFTER THEY'VE BEEN BURIED! AFTER THE RATS HAVE A GO AT THEM!

STOPPED TO PICK UP SOME GRAVE-DIGGING TOOLS THAT ARE ALWAYS LYING AROUND.. CAN'T RISK BRINGING MY OWN...TOO NOTICEABLE!

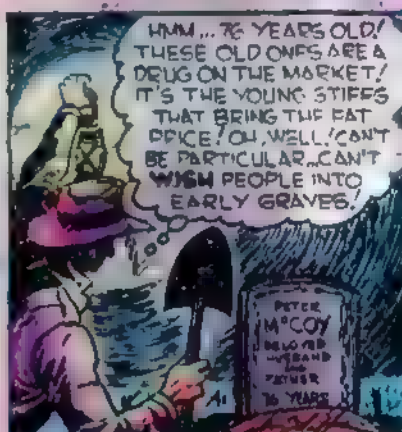


WHEN THESE CEMETERY RATS BREAK INTO THE COFFINS, YOU SHOULD SEE THE MESS THEY MAKE! THESE RATS COME TWO FEET LONG! THEY HAVE TEETH LIKE RAZORS! UGHUU!

BLOCK W! I REMEMBER IT! TOOK THAT WINGSON BOY OUT OF HERE LAST YEAR... NICE CLEAN CUT CHAP, FETCHED TOP PRICE AT THE MEDICAL ACADEMY... I'LL BE LUCKY TO GET A QUARTER OF THAT PRICE FOR TONIGHT'S HAUL...

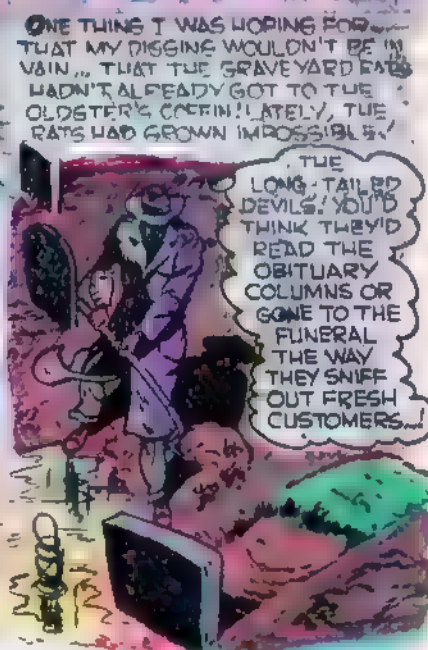


THE TRICK IS TO GET AT A CORPSE THE NIGHT IT IS INTERRED, OR AT THE LATEST, 24 HOURS AFTER, BEFORE THE CEMETERY RATS DISCOVER FRESH PREY IS AVAILABLE!



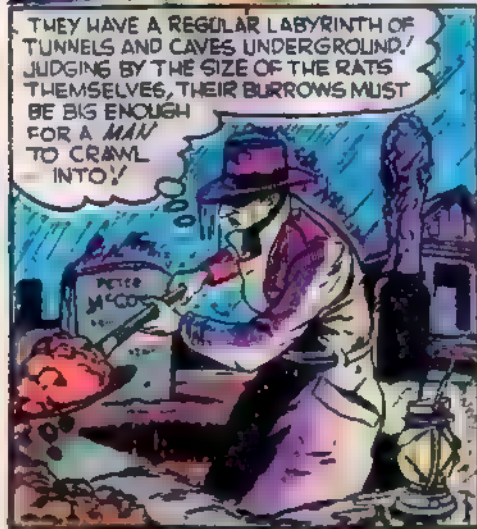
HMM... 76 YEARS OLD! THESE OLD ONES ARE A DRUG ON THE MARKET! IT'S THE YOUNG STIFFS THAT BRING THE FAT PRICE! OH, WELL, CAN'T BE PARTICULAR, CAN'T WISH PEOPLE INTO EARLY GRAVES!

YOU SEE, MANY A CORPSE IS MORE VALUABLE FOR ITS OWN SAKE THAN FOR THE GOLD EARRINGS! IT MIGHT'VE BEEN BURIED WITH! MEDICAL SCHOOLS NEED SUBJECTS FOR DISSECTION AND SOME SCHOOLS DON'T CARE WHERE THE CORPSE COMES FROM!

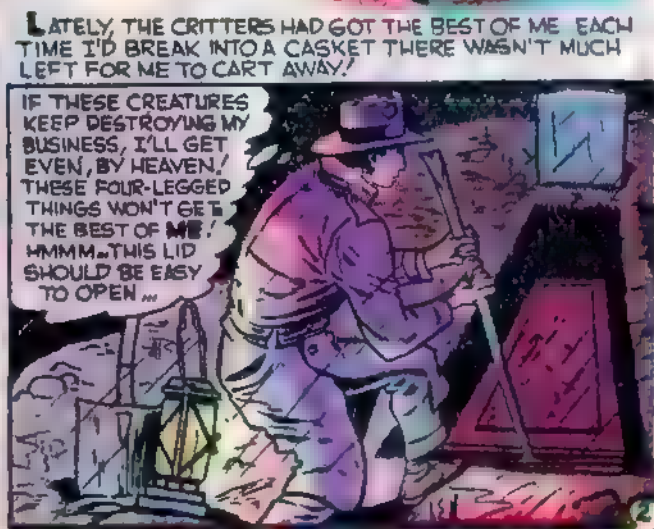


ONE THING I WAS HOPING FOR THAT MY DIGGING WOULDN'T BE IN VAIN... THAT THE GRAVEYARD RATS HADN'T ALREADY GOT TO THE OLDEST'S COFFIN! LATELY, THE RATS HAD GROWN IMPOSSIBLE!

THE LONG-TAILED DEVILS! YOU'D THINK THEY'D READ THE OBITUARY COLUMNS OR GONE TO THE FUNERAL THE WAY THEY SNIFF OUT FRESH CUSTOMERS!



THEY HAVE A REGULAR LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS AND CAVES UNDERGROUND! JUDGING BY THE SIZE OF THE RATS THEMSELVES, THEIR BURROWS MUST BE BIG ENOUGH FOR A MAN TO CRAWL INTO!



LATELY, THE CRITTERS HAD GOT THE BEST OF ME. EACH TIME I'D BREAK INTO A CASSET THERE WASN'T MUCH LEFT FOR ME TO CART AWAY!

IF THESE CREATURES KEEP DESTROYING MY BUSINESS, I'LL GET EVEN, BY HEAVEN! THESE FOUR-LEGGED THINGS WON'T GET THE BEST OF ME! HMMM... THIS LID SHOULD BE EASY TO OPEN...



IF NOT FOR
THOSE RATS,
I'D BE LIVING
ON VELVET!
I'D —
GASP!

N-NO! ~~NO!~~
IT'S NOT
POSSIBLE!

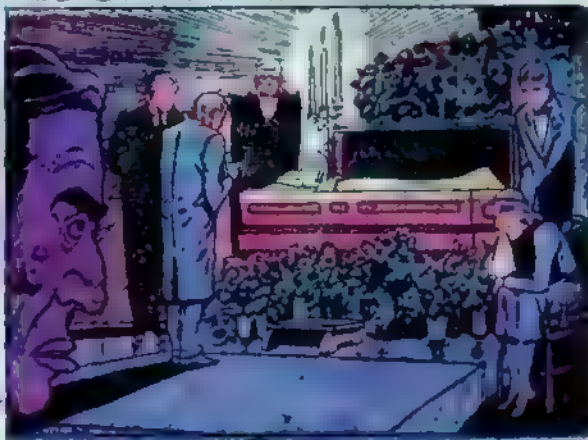


THE BODY'S GONE!
THE RAT'S GOT HERE
ALREADY, CURSE
THEM! THEY DRAGGED
IT DOWN INTO THEIR
UNDERGROUND
BURROWS!



THEY SNATCHED THE BODY RIGHT FROM
UNDER MY NOSE! IS THERE NO END
TO THEIR AUDACITY?

I WENT HOME IN A RAGE! THOSE FILTHY RATS WERE
CHEATING ME OUT OF A LIVING! THE NEXT DAY AT
THE FUNERAL OF A POTENTIAL VICTIM THE SIGHT
OF THE WEALTH ON THE DEAD WOMAN'S BODY
MADE ME TREMBLE WITH EXPECTATION...



THERE'S A FORTUNE
ON HER... THE FOOL!
IF NOT FOR HER
FOOLISHNESS, I
WOULDN'T HAVE
THIS OPPORTUNITY
TO BECOME A
RICH MAN!

THAT NIGHT,
WHILE HER
BODY WAS
STILL WARM
IN HER
GRAVE, I WENT TO
THE
CEMETERY
TO DIG
HER UP! I HAD TO
GET TO HER
BEFORE
THOSE
HUNGRY
RATS DEVoured
HER.



I'LL WORK
FAST! EVERY
SECOND
COUNTS!



THIS IS
ONE CORPSE
THOSE RATS
WON'T GET!

THERE'S GOING TO
BE \$25,000 WORTH
OF JEWELRY ON HER
SCRAWNY BODY!
IT'S GOING TO BE
MINE!

THE COFFIN
AT LAST!
NOW TO
RIP IT
OPEN!

THERE! NOW FOR THE—*(GASP!)*
SHE'S BEING DRAGGED OUT OF
THE COFFIN NOW! THAT HOLE
IN THE CORNER OF THE COFFIN—
IT'S BIG ENOUGH FOR A
MAN TO CRAWL THROUGH!



SO THEY'LL PLAY TRICKS ON
ME, EH? I'LL SHOW 'EM!
THEY WON'T CHEAT ME —
NOT **THIS** TIME! COME HERE,
LADY! YOU'RE NOT GOING
WITH THEM!

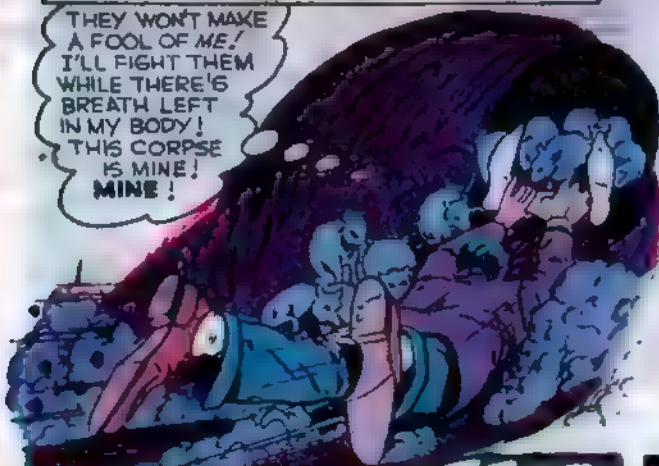


CURSE THOSE RODENTS! THERE
MUST BE AN ARMY OF THEM
PULLING AT THE OTHER END!
THEY'RE DRAGGING ME ALONG!
I MUST GET A BETTER
GRIP ON HER ANKLES!



BUT TO MY SHOCK, THOUGH I PULLED ON THE
CORPSE'S ANKLES WITH ALL MY FORCE, I WAS
DRAGGED DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE TUNNEL!
DESPERATELY, I TRIED TO KEEP MY GRIP!

THEY WON'T MAKE
A FOOL OF ME!
I'LL FIGHT THEM
WHILE THERE'S
BREATH LEFT
IN MY BODY!
THIS CORPSE
IS MINE!
MINE!



ALL I WANT ARE
THE JEWELS!
MAYBE I CAN
REACH FOR
THEM—SNATCH
THEM OFF
EVEN AS THEY
PULL US
ALONG...

THE TUNNEL
WALL! THE
ROOF! IT'S
COLLAPSING!



IN MY FRANTIC EFFORT TO HOLD THE
CORPSE'S ANKLES, AND TO WRENCH HER
BODY AWAY FROM THE ENEMY, I SHOVED
THE EARTH AROUND A BIT...

I MOVED ABOUT
FRANTICALLY TO
FREE MYSELF!

IT WAS
USELESS! I WAS
TRAPPED —!
SEALED UP IN A
TOMB OF DIRT!
EVERYWHERE
I SAW RATS,
SCURRYING
AND
SQUEALING!

THEY'RE COMING
FOR ME! THEY KNOW
I CAN'T GET OUT!
**THEY'LL EAT ME
ALIVE!**



BUT THEY DIDN'T HARM ME... THEY LET ME
LIVE! I'VE BEEN HERE A LONG TIME NOW...
AND MY PROFESSION IS STILL...

STEALING BODIES!

THE END

OFF WITH HIS HEAD



LOOK AT THE HORROR
OF YOUR VICTIM,
MARCEL...



SEE HIM SQUIRM, AS
THE BLADE OF THE
GUILLOTINE FLASHES
DOWN...



YOU'RE PROUD OF YOUR
WORK AS THE KNIFE
CUTS CLEANLY...



AND ANOTHER HEAD
TUMBLES INTO THE
BASKET... TO STARE
AT THE SKY WITH
SIGHTLESS EYES!



BUT THE CROWD IS NOT PLEASED, MARCEL!
THEY HATE YOU BECAUSE YOU LOVE YOUR
WORK, AND THEY CALL YOU...**THE BUTCHER!**

BUTCHER!
BUTCHER!

THEY SAY HE TORTURES
HIS VICTIMS TO MAKE
THEM SCREAM LOUDER
AT THE EXECUTION!

HE'S
NOT
HUMAN!

YOU
HATE
THEM
ALL,
YOU
WOULD
LOVE
TO
SEND
THEM
ONE
BY
ONE
TO THE
GUILLOTINE
AND
HEAR
THEM
SHRIEK
WITH
DEATH...

**FILTHY
BEAST!**

**DIRTY
DOG!**

AT THE CAGES YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS! PEOPLE
FEAR YOU AND MOVE AWAY...

AND THEN... AS
EVERY NIGHT,
YOU'RE DRUNK,
AND YOU STUMBLE
INTO THE
GUTTER
AND FALL
ASLEEP...

YOU DREAM OF THE STRANGE
MAN WHO CARRIES THE BASKET...

AND THE HEADS OF YOUR VICTIMS...

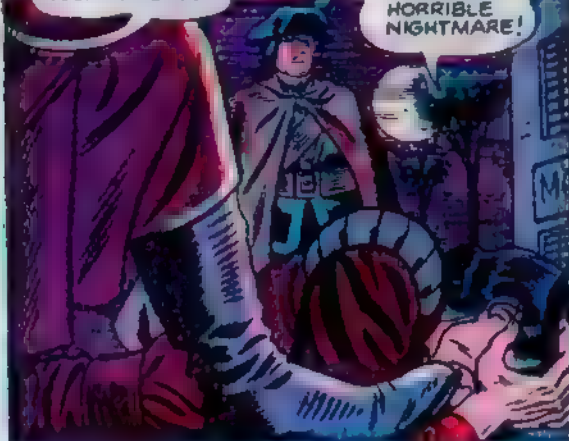
AND ONE OF THOSE HEADS IS
YOURS!



AND THEN YOU AWAKEN FROM A TORTURED DREAM...

HEY, MARCEL! BETTER GET ON YOUR WAY HOME, BEFORE SOMEONE SEES YOU, AND CUTS YOUR THROAT!

EH? HUH? OH, I MUSTA BEEN ASLEEP! BRRR... I HAD A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE!



YOU WANDER OFF TO YOUR DARK, DREARY ROOM FOR A LITTLE REST... SOME SLEEP BEFORE THE PLEASURE OF TOMORROW'S EXECUTIONS...



WHAT YOU SEE ON THE FLOOR THROWS A SHOCK OF FEAR UP YOUR SPINE. THE BLOOD SOAKED HEAD-BASKET!



WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHY IS IT THERE? YOU WANT TO FLEE BUT SOMETHING STOPS YOU...



AIEEE! NO! NO! WHO ARE YOU?

YOU FEEL A STRONG IMPULSE TO OPEN IT AND LOOK INSIDE!



AGAINST YOUR WILL YOU REACH OUT...



AND SLOWLY OPEN THE BASKET...



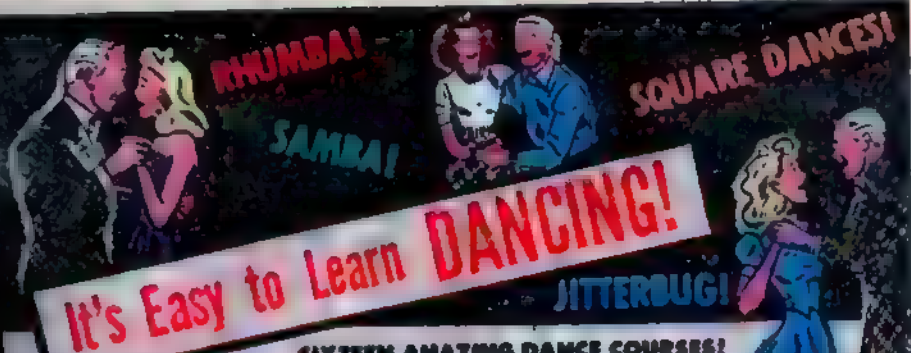
WIDER, UNTIL



SHOCK CUTS LIKE A STEEL BLADE AS YOU SEE WHAT'S INSIDE... YOUR OWN HEAD!!



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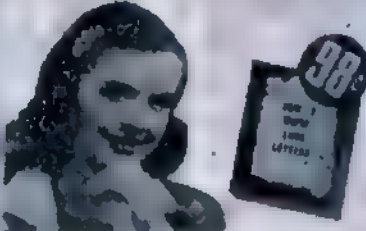
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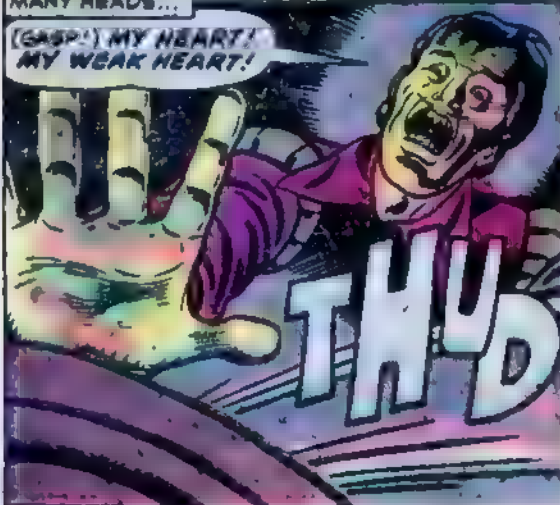
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YOUR OWN TORTURED EYES STARING AT YOU FROM THE BASKET INTO WHICH YOU HAVE ROLLED SO MANY HEADS...

[GASP!] MY HEART!
MY WEAK HEART!



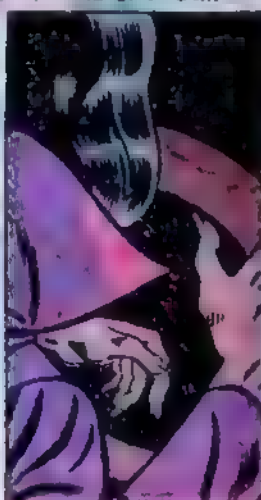
YOU FEEL THE SHARP PAIN IN YOUR HEART! IT SENDS A BLINDING FLASH UP TO YOUR BRAIN! AND THEN...THE BLACKNESS...OF DEATH...



YOU ARE DEAD, MARCEL...
BUT THERE IS MORE...



A HAND REACHES INTO
THE BASKET...



AND PULLS OUT...



THE MIRROR...



ITS JAGGED, KNIFE-LIKE
EDGE IS RAISED.



AND THEN... LIKE LA
BELLE GUILLOTINE...
IT FALLS...



AND YOUR HEAD...LIKE
THOSE OF YOUR
VICTIMS... ROLLS INTO
THE BASKET OF DEATH!



THE END

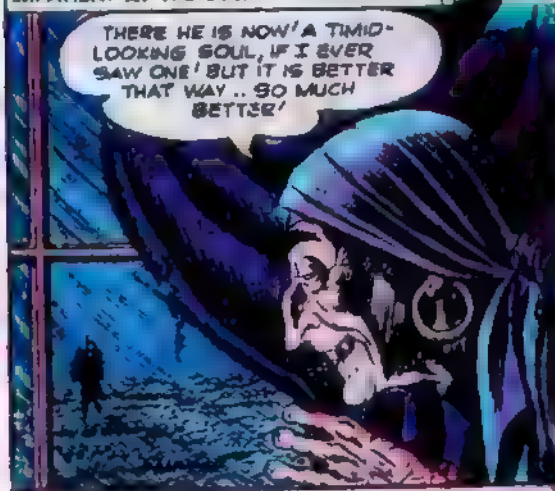
TALKING CORPSE



JOE SINNOTT

9806

THE HISS OF RAIN SPLATTERED AGAINST THE WINDOW AS I KEPT MY EYES FIXED ON THE WINDING ROAD BELOW ME! MY VISITOR WAS LATE, AND I GREW IMPATIENT AT THE DELAY! SUDDENLY...



HE PAUSED A MOMENT AND STARED UP AT THE HOUSE IN MY DIRECTION! I KNEW WHAT THOUGHTS WERE PASSING THROUGH HIS MIND! THE SUDDEN DESIRE TO TURN HIS BACK AND RUN! BUT HE WOULDN'T OF THAT I WAS CERTAIN...



THE HARSH CLANGING OF THE BELL HASTENED MY FOOT STEPS' BUT I STOPPED BRIEFLY TO SPEAK TO MY SERVANT' HIS SIMPLE MIND HAD LONG SINCE BECOME ENSLAVED TO MY IRON WILL ...

DON'T STAND THERE LIKE AN IDIOT! YOU KNOW YOUR DUTIES! GET BELOW AND DO EXACTLY AS YOU'VE BEEN TAUGHT!

I GO, MADAM... AT ONCE!



SEVERAL MOMENTS LATER, I LET MY VISITOR IN...

I'M SORRY I'M LATE MADAM ZORINA... BUT THE WEATHER MADE IT SO DIFFICULT! IF YOU HAD A PHONE I'D HAVE...

TELEPHONES ARE NOT PERMITTED HERE, MR. TRAVERS! HAVE YOU BROUGHT THE PICTURES?



I. I HAVE THEM RIGHT HERE!

GOOD! IF I AM TO CONTACT YOUR DEAD SISTER AT ALL IT WILL HAVE TO BE THROUGH THIS IMAGE OF HOW SHE APPEARED IN LIFE!



A MOMENT LATER, HIS FACE UNDERWENT A SICKENING CHANGE! I KNEW WHAT HE HAD SEEN, AND I SMILED INWARDLY AT HIS WHIMPERING FEAR...

SOMETHING WRONG, MR TRAVERS? SOMETHING YOU SEE PERHAPS BUT CAN'T BELIEVE?

MERCIFUL HEAVENS! IT. IT'S COMING THIS WAY!



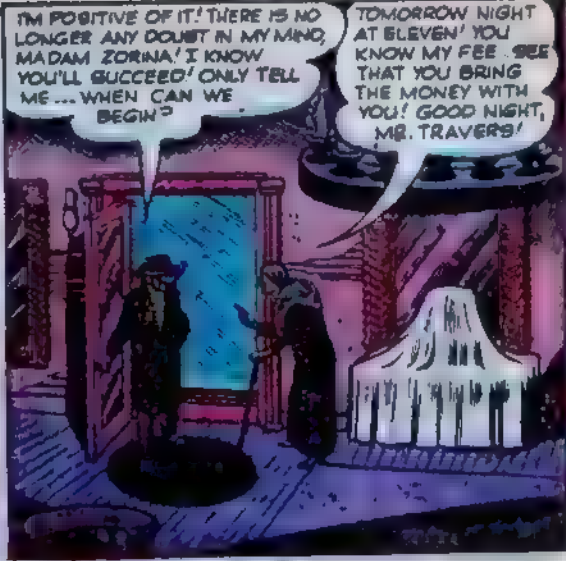
CAREFULLY, I WATCHED ITS APPROACH... AND AT THE CRUCIAL MOMENT, I STEPPED FORWARD...





IT DISAPPEARED!

WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN IS ONLY A SIMPLE EXAMPLE OF MY SPIRITUAL POWERS! THAT SHOULD CONVINCE YOU THAT I'LL SUCCEED IN CONTACTING YOUR DEAD SISTER WHERE OTHERS HAVE FAILED!



I'M POSITIVE OF IT! THERE IS NO LONGER ANY DOUBT IN MY MIND, MADAM ZORINA! I KNOW YOU'LL SUCCEED! ONLY TELL ME... WHEN CAN WE BEGIN?

TOMORROW NIGHT AT ELEVEN! YOU KNOW MY FEE. SEE THAT YOU BRING THE MONEY WITH YOU! GOOD NIGHT, MR. TRAVERS!

THEY COULD NEVER SAY I PROODED HIM INTO THE ARRANGEMENT! HE CAME WILLINGLY... HE SAW... HE BELIEVED! HE HUNGRED FOR THIS MEETING WITH THE DEAD... AND I WAS PREPARING A BANQUET HE'D NEVER FORGET...

HOW I DESPISE THEM... AND THIS ONE MOST OF ALL... THE STUPID, BLUNDERING IDIOT!



WHEN TRAVERS RETURNED THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, WE WENT DIRECTLY TO THE SEANCE ROOM! EVERYTHING WAS IN ORDER... EXCEPT ONE FINAL DETAIL...

THE MONEY, TRAVERS! I INSIST UPON PAYMENT IN ADVANCE!

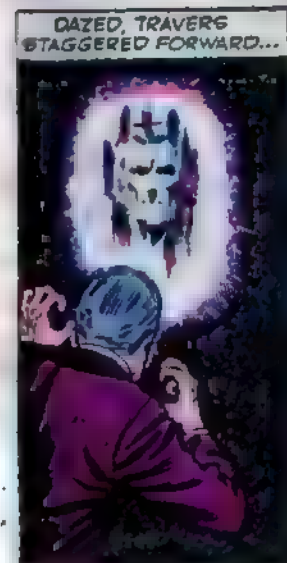
OF COURSE, MADAM! AND HERE IS PROOF OF MY TRUST IN YOU FIVE ONE THOUSAND DOLLAR BILLS! EXACTLY THE WAY YOU REQUESTED IT!



FOR SEVERAL MINUTES I WAITED, AND WITH EACH PASSING SECOND THE SILENCE BECAME MORE INTENSIFIED. BUILDING ITSELF STEADILY FORWARD INTO A CRESCENDO OF SOUNDLESS FURY! THEN, I THRUST MY STICK FORWARD!

LOOK!

THAT LIGHT! IT'S TAKING SHAPE!



DAZED, TRAVERS STAGGERED FORWARD...



IT'S BEATRICE, MY SISTER! S-SAY SOMETHING!



I AM... BEATRICE! COME CLOSER, MY BROTHER... CLOSER!



THAT IS BETTER... SO MUCH BETTER!

THIS WAS THE MOMENT I WAITED FOR! AS THE HOLLOW VOICE ECHOED THROUGH THE ROOM, I CAUTIOUSLY CREEPT FORWARD TO WHERE TRAVERS STOOD! THEN...

THAT'S RIGHT, YOU FOOL! KEEP TALKING WHILE I HELP MYSELF TO THIS! I KNOW THERE ARE LOTS MORE BILLS WHERE THOSE OTHER FIVE CAME FROM!



WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE! AS I WITHDREW MY HAND, IT CAUGHT ON A LOOSE THREAD IN HIS POCKET, AND HE FELT IT.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? MY WALLET! YOU... YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A COMMON THIEF!

SO NOW YOU KNOW, YOU OLD FOOL! YOU WERE STUPID ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT I COULD BRING BACK THE DEAD! WELL, I CAN'T. THEY NEVER COME BACK, TRAVERS!

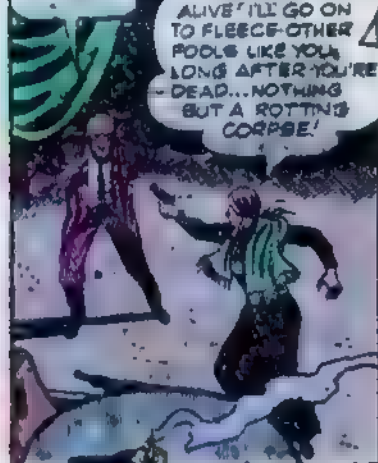


LOOK! NOTHING BUT MODELLING CLAY AND PIECES OF STRING! THAT'S WHY I ASKED YOU TO BRING A PHOTOGRAPH! EVERYTHING YOU SAW HERE WAS DONE WITH PROPS, AND THE POWER OF SUGGESTION!



YOU TRICKED ME! I'LL REPORT YOU AS A THIEF. A FAKE!

YOU'VE LEARNED MY SECRET BUT YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE THIS HOUSE ALIVE! I'LL GO ON TO FLEECE OTHER FOOLS LIKE YOU, LONG AFTER YOU'RE DEAD... NOTHING BUT A ROTTING CORPSE!



GOOD-BYE, MR. TRAVERS!

ARRGH!



BUT AS I STARED WITH CONTEMPT AT THAT CRUMPLED FORM, I WAS AWARE OF A SUDDEN CHANGE... AND I EXPERIENCED TERROR FOR THE FIRST TIME...



THE CLAY HEAD OF HIS SISTER SUDDENLY SQUIRMED WITH LIFE! GLIMY, CLAWING TENTACLES REACHED OUT TOWARD ME...



WHEN I RETURN TO NOWHERE, ZORINA... IT WON'T BE ALONE!



THE END



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